



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

SafeTips from the Naval Safety Center

Quick and easy summaries to find out about something new you're doing or as a refresher for something you haven't done in a while. They're a great training tool to pass around at meetings, through e-mail, or post on bulletin boards.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common injury due to repetitive use and strain of the tendons in the wrist. Symptoms include a feeling of numbness or tingling in the hands or fingers; weakness; and pain.

To protect your wrists, try these things:

- ⇒ Do exercises to strengthen the muscles that are opposite the ones you use a lot.
- ⇒ Take frequent breaks to stretch or relax from the repetitive motion.
- ⇒ Make sure your workstation is ergonomically correct, especially your chair and the location and height of your keyboard.
- ⇒ Good posture is very important.
- ⇒ If you have to grip objects, try to use your whole hand, not just your fingertips.
- ⇒ Don't ignore aches and pains that persist. See a doctor.
- ⇒ Using an ergonomic keyboard (split and angled) may resolve stress and pain issues. Look into getting a prescription from your doctor and having your unit get you one of these special keyboards to see if this

will do the trick for you before you require surgery.

When sitting at a keyboard, here are some things to do:

- ⇒ Your forearms should be parallel to the floor, and in line with your wrists.
- ⇒ Use a padded rest for your wrists. Don't rest them on the sharp edge of a desk.
- ⇒ Try to move your fingers instead of your wrists.
- ⇒ Break up the amount of time you spend keyboarding by taking care of other tasks or duties.

Here are a few exercises. To relax your hands and wrists, shake them around in all directions for 10-to-15 seconds. Extend your arms straight out and raise your hands up. Make a fist, then stretch your fingers far apart. Put your hands flat on a table top with your arm about 90 degrees; press down firmly for a few seconds.

- ⇒ If you use hand tools, opt for those that have padded and textured handles.
- ⇒ Don't grip things more firmly than necessary.

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